

August 25, 2016

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Board of Supervisors**

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**TO:** Supervisor, Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
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Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

**FROM:** Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.  
Director

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Office of The Honorable Eric Garcetti,  
Mayor of the City of Los Angeles

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**SUBJECT: REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
PROPOSITION 47 FUNDING**

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On December 1, 2015, the Board of Supervisors instructed the Director of the County's Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), in collaboration with the Manager of the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Reentry to convene the appropriate stakeholders, including significant representation by community-based organizations and people previously incarcerated for offenses eligible for reclassification under Proposition 47 (Prop. 47), also known as *The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act*, to recommend a process and schedule for collaborating with regional stakeholders to prepare an application for forthcoming state grant funds, with a strong focus on promoting evidence-based interventions. We were directed to facilitate a community engagement process that included a minimum of three (3) town hall meetings to solicit input from County residents and stakeholders adversely impacted by the following: poverty and crime as defined by the United States Census Bureau Data on Poverty Thresholds; rates of unemployment and homelessness; concentrated populations of probationers, parolees, and juvenile offenders; and high rates of violent and non-violent crimes.

**Proposition 47 Background**

In November 2014, California voters approved Prop. 47, which reduced certain non-violent, non-serious drug and property crimes from felonies to misdemeanors. Specifically, six crimes were to be reclassified from felony/wobbler status to misdemeanor status: simple drug possession, petty theft under \$950, shoplifting under

*"The mission of the Los Angeles County Health Agency is to improve health and wellness across Los Angeles County through effective, integrated, comprehensive, culturally appropriate services, programs, and policies that promote healthy people living in healthy communities."*





\$950, writing a bad check under \$950, forging a bad check under \$950, and receipt of stolen property under \$950. However, the proposition excluded the following classes of offenders: those individuals with prior convictions for murder, rape or child molestation; individuals on the sex offender registry; and individuals with a prior forgery or identity theft convictions (excluded only from check crimes).

The enactment of Prop. 47 was expected to result in two significant benefits for the residents of California. First, the reduction of certain felonies to misdemeanors removed many barriers to employment, healthcare services, education, and other social services for individuals who previously experienced restrictions in those areas due to classification as felons. Secondly, the reduction of felony convictions to misdemeanors was expected to reduce the incarceration rate, thereby reducing the expense of incarceration incurred by state and local governments (approximately \$47,000 per person annually in California), which is expected to result in significant cost savings for the State of California. Per Prop. 47, the cost savings is to be used specifically for mental health and substance use treatment, truancy and dropout prevention among K-12 public schools students, and victim services.

### **Proposition 47 Town Hall Meetings**

#### **I. Planning Process**

On February 29, 2016, in preparation for the town hall meetings, the ODR and the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Reentry held a Prop. 47 planning meeting with key stakeholder groups. The community-based organizations (CBOs) in attendance provided insight and guidance on the best manner to engage other community members and solicit feedback on their perceived needs in the three areas for possible state funding under Prop. 47.

Stakeholders provided insight that helped inform our town hall format and approach. Key recommendations around best practices are incorporated into the latter portion of this report. Key recommendations around the structure and execution of the town hall meetings were as follows:

- i. Incorporate community members into the town hall planning process;
- ii. Give most impacted communities key speaking roles in town halls;
- iii. Utilize asset mapping;
- iv. Allow community vetting of report results prior to presentation to Board of Supervisors;
- v. Provide general educational overview of Prop. 47;
- vi. Utilize working groups to help ensure that everyone's voice is heard;



- vii. Time length should be between 90 minutes and two hours;
- viii. Town halls should be held either on weekday evenings after work and/or Sundays afternoons; and
- ix. A total of three (3) to four (4) town halls should be held.

We considered and incorporated the stakeholders' recommendations, as evidenced by the format, content and timing of the town hall meetings.

## **II. Town Hall Meetings' Location, Participation and Format**

Our offices held six (6) town hall meetings throughout Los Angeles County in the areas with the highest levels of crime and poverty as follows:

| <b>Town Hall</b> | <b>Date</b>    | <b>Place</b>                             | <b>Supervisory District</b> | <b>City of LA Council District</b> |
|------------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1                | April 12, 2016 | Ramona Hall Community Center             | 1                           | 1                                  |
| 2                | April 20, 2016 | South Los Angeles Sports Activity Center | 2                           | 8                                  |
| 3                | April 27, 2016 | Chester Washington Golf Course           | 2                           | N/A                                |
| 4                | May 3, 2016    | East Los Angeles Library                 | 1                           | N/A                                |
| 5                | May 10, 2016   | McBride Park, City of Long Beach*        | 4                           | N/A                                |
| 6                | May 12, 2016   | Van Nuys City Hall/Marvin Brody Center   | 3                           | 6                                  |

\*Held in partnership with the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, California Endowment & Long Beach Mayor's Office.

All town halls were held on weekday evenings in accessible locations with free parking and light refreshments were served. On average, the town halls lasted two hours and had approximately 50-60 community members in attendance, with one of the town halls skewing high and one skewing low.

At each town hall meeting, Californians for Safety and Justice (CSJ), the authors of Prop. 47, provided presentations around the implications, intent and impact of the law. In addition, the Drug Policy Alliance, Legal Aid Foundation for Los Angeles, and Neighborhood Legal Services for Los Angeles County provided information about the legal process for felony reclassification pursuant to Prop. 47. The Advancement Project also provided informative asset mapping presentations that explained the resources currently available in the specific community in which each town hall was being held.



We also had the strong support and participation of several community-based organizations (CBOs) throughout this process. Leaders from the following CBOs served as break-out group facilitators and presenters at the meetings:

- A New Way of Life
- Bend the Arc
- Californians for Safety and Justice
- CAST
- Coalition for Responsible Community Development (CRCD)
- Communities in Schools
- Community Coalition
- Drug Policy Alliance
- Homeboy Industries
- LA VOICE
- Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership (LARRP)
- Neighborhood Legal Services for Los Angeles County
- SCOPE
- The Advancement Project

We also had in attendance representatives from the following public agencies:

- Los Angeles County Public Defender
- Los Angeles County Alternate Public Defender
- Los Angeles County District Attorney
- Los Angeles County Probation Department
- Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
- Los Angeles County Community and Senior Services
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Los Angeles County Department of Child Support Services
- Los Angeles Chief Executive Office
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Los Angeles City Mayor's Gang Reduction & Youth Development Department
- Los Angeles City Council District 8
- Los Angeles City Council District 9
- Los Angeles City Council District 15



### III. Recommendations and Priorities

The town hall meetings provided insights into the many needs of the communities we visited. The balance of this report provides the community's recommendations and priorities for applying for State funding pursuant to Prop. 47 to support the County's investment in (1) community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment; (2) truancy and dropout prevention among K-12 public school students; and (3) victim services based on the input received at the meetings.<sup>i</sup>

#### **Community-Based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment**

It is well-settled that the behavioral health needs of those engaged in criminal behavior must be effectively addressed in order to realize positive outcomes in crime rates and recidivism. This is especially true for Prop. 47 offenses because drug and alcohol use are implicated in both the drug-related offenses themselves, as well as in property offenses where individuals often steal to support a substance use disorder. Moreover, when individuals have unaddressed mental health needs, they often attempt to self-medicate through drug and alcohol abuse.

When behavioral health needs are unaddressed, we see cycles of recidivism that spiral out of control. Indeed, a study has reflected that when individuals are released from incarceration back into the community with untreated or inadequately treated behavioral health needs, most will return to a life of drug and alcohol use and crime, typically committing as many as 100 offenses annually, often to support a substance use disorder.<sup>ii</sup> Conversely, when convicted individuals with substance use disorders complete substance use disorder treatment during and post incarceration, they recidivate at a rate of 37% lower than those who do not participate in treatment programs.<sup>iii</sup> Moreover, when convicted individuals with mental health disorders receive adequate mental health treatment, they recidivate at a rate of 80% lower than those who do not.<sup>iv</sup> When those in treatment are stably housed, and not homeless, recidivism rates drop even further.

Community members often observe first-hand the negative outcomes associated with untreated behavioral health needs. They also know their respective communities' areas of highest need. The community identified the following areas where funding is critical for this population:

- i. ***Reentry Services:*** Community members observed that individuals with behavioral health needs were often released back into the community with their mental health or substance abuse needs still unaddressed. In situations where individuals had received some treatment while incarcerated, the community noted that there was no treatment continuity



post release. The community recommended a focus on trauma-informed care, counseling and case supervision that links services from in-custody to the community upon reentry.

- ii. **Wrap-Around Services:** The community observed that there are limited providers that offer wrap-around services for those with substance abuse disorders and mental illness. While receiving treatment is important, the community stresses the need for programming that treats the needs of the population as a whole and is not one-sided. Specifically, if healthcare is addressed, but an individual has no access to other wrap-around services such as family reunification, housing, jobs, education and social engagement support, an individual's health will decline despite access to healthcare treatment. Programs such as the Texas Offender's Re-entry Initiative and Volunteers of America Los Angeles offer models for community based wrap-around services for adults re-entering society.
- iii. **Treatment Housing:** There is a shortage of housing dedicated to mental health and substance abuse treatment for individuals who have co-occurring disorders. One barrier to seeking and staying in treatment is the lack of treatment options with housing. Community participants noted that providing treatment without stable housing was ineffective. One frequent recommendation was to partner with organizations that provide this specialized treatment and develop housing options that could be connected to these clinical service providers.
- iv. **Service Accessibility & Outreach:** Community members observed that available clinical services are not well advertised nor are they provided in a client-centered, accessible manner. A key recommendation was to increase field-based clinical mental health and substance use disorder services to help people transition from incarceration or homelessness into board and care and/or sober living facilities. A key aspect of making services accessible was to provide transportation and locate services on regular transportation routes throughout Los Angeles County.
- v. **Trauma-Informed Care:** Trauma-informed care is a priority that crosses over all three of the areas for potential funding. For the purposes of this report, a traumatic event is an experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress, or harm. It is an event that is perceived and experienced as a threat to one's safety or to the stability of one's world. Trauma can result from violence; death/loss of life/bereavement; war; sexual, physical and mental abuse; as well as mistreatment. The correlation between the experience of a traumatic event and the development of a mental health condition and/or substance abuse disorder is well-documented. The community cited the need for an increase in the number of providers and resources for trauma-informed



care not only for the formerly incarcerated population, but for children of formerly incarcerated parents and their support network. The first recommendation is that trauma-informed care begin in the jails to assist those individuals in custody. Upon release they can be linked to a capable and high quality provider to continue trauma-informed treatment. The second recommendation is to integrate trauma-centered treatment into schools for students to receive services while in a safe learning environment. There have been several successful programs implemented across the country that have instituted in-school counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder and have yielded success for student participants. Further development of programs and training for providers on trauma-centered treatment is essential to the well-being of our communities and those impacted by Proposition 47.

- vi. ***Stigmas Related to Behavioral Health:*** A key barrier identified was that in many underserved communities, a stigma exists around being identified as someone with a behavioral health need. There are additional stigmas around accessing or receiving behavioral health treatment. A key recommendation was to provide public education on mental health and substance abuse needs and the value of rehabilitation and treatment.
- vii. ***Partnerships with the Community:*** Community members recommended that re-entry service providers and government entities develop stronger relationships and partnerships with CBOs in order to more effectively engage the community and facilitate the collaboration and delivery of services.
- viii. ***Juvenile Mental Health Services:*** Community members observed that there was a lack of programming available to address juvenile mental health and substance abuse needs. Attendees suggested that efforts be made to increase juvenile mental health programming upon release and to incorporate family support as a crucial component of treatment.
- ix. ***Variation in Treatment Programs:*** Community members stressed the need for different types of treatment programs because not every individual will need treatment in the same manner. They referred to an overwhelming number of programs that operate on the "one size fits all" approach and do not effectively address the issues faced by each specific individual. Specifically, they recommended that a range of treatment programs and approaches be offered to meet the varied needs of the population.



### **Truancy and Dropout Prevention Among K-12 Public School Students**

The California State Legislature defines truancy as “a student missing more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year.”<sup>v</sup> In the 2014-2015 school year, the California Department of Education reported that Los Angeles County had an overall truancy rate of 31.42%, which is very close to the statewide average of 31.43%.<sup>vi</sup> However, the 3.5% dropout rate for students in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades in the County of Los Angeles is higher than the statewide rate of 2.8% and is more prevalent in certain communities as follows: American Indian (7.0%); African American (5.3%); Hispanic (3.9%); and Pacific Islander (3.5%).<sup>vii</sup> This is a serious problem for our cities and County. Moreover, the disproportionate rate at which students from underserved minority communities are not participating in their secondary education reflects a systemic failure.

The parties that are best positioned to speak to the detrimental impact of these high truancy and dropout rates are the community and the organizations that work tirelessly to develop programs to assist this population. The community representation at the town hall meetings provided essential insight into the underlying issues that drive the high truancy and dropout rates among Los Angeles County's students. The community identified the following areas where funding is critical in order to reduce truancy and dropout rates among this high risk population:

- i. **Language Barriers:** With a sizable immigrant population residing in Los Angeles County, language barriers cause a “disconnect” between parents and teachers in identifying issues and solutions for students. The development of parental translation services, “English as a Second Language” courses for parents, or the development of community health worker programs geared toward assisting immigrant parents in educational system navigation would be helpful in addressing the prevalent language barrier.
- ii. **Gang Intervention:** In the last decade, parents and teachers have seen a significant drop in school district-facilitated gang intervention programming before, during, and after school. These types of programs (such as the City of Los Angeles’ Gang Reduction & Youth Development [GRYD] Program) have shown success in the reduction of gang involvement and school dropout rates, and also help to develop stronger emotional and social skills. It should be noted that a robust integrated program that not only offers school-centered services, but community programming, is necessary to continue to provide alternatives to gang life. Additionally, providing services such as tattoo removal, workforce development, and self-empowerment training are a few critical, key elements that should be included in gang intervention programs. In



addition to GRYD, there are other community-based organizations that are actively developing and leading effective educational and extracurricular after school programs.

- iii. ***Trade Programming for High School Students:*** Another barrier contributing to the truancy and dropout rates among middle and high school students is the lack of programming for trade skill development and other alternatives to college. Community members expressed interest in the development of pathways to trade-based careers and trade-skill training in high schools. This type of programming would make students aware of other tangible career pathways outside of the traditional college route. It would also assist students in developing the necessary skills to establish a career beyond high school, so that they graduate from high school "career ready" and employable.
- iv. ***Collaboration between Local Government, Community Organizations, School Districts and Law Enforcement Agencies:*** Community participants at the town hall meetings feel that strong systems are not in place for the above-listed entities to talk and transfer information pertaining to juveniles. One recommendation is to develop intentional coordination through an entity or centralized office that would facilitate coordination of various points of transition in a young person's life, such as the point of reintegration back into the school system after absenteeism, or engagement of youth when they are most at risk of dropping out or engaging in criminal behavior. There have been some notable examples across the country of successful partnerships between the various entities in developing not only wrap-around services for youth re-entering the community, but also assisting with their transition back into the educational system. For example, programs, such as Oakland Unite and One Summer Chicago Plus Program, have offered youth who have either been involved with the juvenile justice system or who have been truant access to wraparound services.
- v. ***Mentorship Programs:*** Years of research have affirmed the effectiveness of mentorship programs. Mentorship programs are essential in that they not only provide a pro-social support network for students, but also assist in teaching successful life navigation and introducing youth to desired career pathways. These types of programs not only build the confidence of students, but positively contribute to their lives beyond high school. Additionally, mentorship creates opportunities to provide counseling, tutoring and guidance to youth who otherwise may not engage in such services.
- vi. ***Unwarranted School Discipline:*** In the last decade we have seen a shift where the predominant school culture supports suspension and expulsion



as the primary solution to students' behavioral problems. The community participants advocated that funding be used to train school officials on the identification of the difference between the exhibition of behavior that poses a public safety concern and warrants exclusionary discipline, as opposed to behavior resulting from a learning disability, trauma and/or other difficulties that may be causing a student to act out in school and can be addressed through a clinical or supports-based intervention. If these issues can be identified and addressed earlier in a student's educational career, then the proper educational services and resources can be provided to the student and their families. Additionally, community members stressed the need to have access to legal resources and education pertaining to their children's educational rights so that they can advocate properly for their children's needs.

### **Victim Services**

Victim Services have traditionally been focused on supporting victims of crime. However, of late, there has been an expansion of the way in which we think about victim services to include addressing the needs of the community and also engaging the criminally involved population through a restorative justice framework. Although the needs of the primary victims should remain the primary focus of service delivery after traumatic events, the community stressed that often times the individuals committing the crimes are also the victims of some type of past trauma or crime themselves. The community raised the following common themes surrounding the needs for funding in the area of victim services:

- i. ***Knowledge of Resources:*** The community cited a lack of awareness of the array of victim services available to victims of violent acts. They stressed that there should be more advertisement of the types of services available, both in the community and through governmental entities. Additionally, the process to apply for the services must be streamlined to make the services easier to access.
- ii. ***Eligibility Criteria of Victim Services:*** Traditionally, victim services programs have been designed to only offer services for victims, and not the perpetrator, who might themselves have experienced a traumatic experience, which ultimately led to their commission of certain crimes. Data, anecdotal and otherwise, reflects that most offenders of violent crimes were at one time victims themselves. The community repeatedly stressed the need for victim services for the formerly incarcerated population. One specific recommendation was to expand the scope of victim services eligibility criteria to include victims of crime that might have at one time been offenders. Additionally, there should be an alternative service pathway for diverse communities who may be reticent to access



services provided through governmental entities, such as gang-affiliated individuals and undocumented persons.

- iii. ***Trauma Training in the Community:*** Community members cited a lack of training in trauma support and treatment services available to community members who are well-positioned to provide support and outreach. Many community members, including formerly criminally involved individuals, experience stressful events rising to the level of trauma on a daily basis. One recommendation was to train formerly incarcerated individuals and other community members in the provision of post-traumatic services and pair them with local law enforcement, schools and community-based organizations to provide immediate, on-site assistance following a violent criminal act. This would help facilitate the healing process because it would afford the victim or their family members the opportunity to speak to someone who might have at one time been similarly situated and who is well-positioned to help the victim begin to heal and cope with the post-traumatic stress and emotions experienced due to the traumatic event.
- iv. ***Streamline the Restitution Process:*** Community members recommended that the County develop a task force charged with evaluating the restitution process and providing recommendations on how to streamline the process to make it easier for victims to access those resources.
- v. ***Victim Housing:*** The community expressed an increased need for safe and secure housing and/or housing relocation funds for victims of crime.

#### **Additional Miscellaneous Recommendations**

In addition to the robust previous lists of priorities and recommendations provided by the community for each of the three funding areas, community members also raised the following more generalized recommendations:

- i. ***Access to Legal Services:*** Generally speaking, the Prop. 47 population can benefit from increased legal education and resources, as well as general access to legal representation that can assist them in addressing various collateral consequences of conviction that they may be experiencing.
- ii. ***Cultural Competence & Relevance:*** Community members identified cultural competence and cultural relevance as a necessity for effective service delivery.

Other more generalized recommendations around the manner in which funds are awarded, organizations are vetted, and contracts are developed, would fall under



the purview of the RFP development process which is governed by the BSCC's Executive Steering Committee at the State level.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The town hall meetings not only provided us with the opportunity to hear from the community in general, but more specifically, allowed us to hear directly from those most heavily impacted by Prop. 47. As reflected by the above-listed recommendations, the community's input was both insightful and thoughtful. In addition, it is important to note that the town halls were not just beneficial to our respective offices as we worked to develop this report, but that the community consistently expressed that they benefited from the process as well. At each town hall meeting, community members expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to articulate their view points and concerns around this issue. For many of them, the town hall meetings were their first foray into civic engagement and it meant a great deal to them to know that their elected officials were interested in their input and voice.

We are committed to the development of innovative partnerships and programming to assist the community and individuals eligible for reclassification under Prop. 47 in strengthening our neighborhoods. Overall, based on the input received from the town hall meeting attendees and stakeholders, it is the recommendation of the County ODR and the City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Reentry that the applications for Prop. 47 funds for which our local units of government may apply, be coordinated with community-based organizations directly, or with community stakeholders in general, that have a track record of effective service provision and engagement in community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment, truancy and dropout prevention, and victim services, as articulated in more detail in the former portions of this report.

In closing, we want to express our gratitude to the hundreds of people who took time away from families and out of their evenings to help contribute to the content of the report. The community members brought a richness of perspective and passion that made the town hall meetings a true success. To the communities that hosted us and the individuals who represented not only their own voice, but the voices of their families, friends and neighbors, we offer our deep felt thanks.

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cc: Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Office Board of Supervisors



## Notes

<sup>i</sup> In the section, we highlight nationally-recognized programs that provide effective models for various service areas. While there are several highly-regarded programs and community-based organizations providing services in our region, we have intentionally refrained from specifically highlighting any of them as examples in this report in the interests of various considerations.

<sup>ii</sup> Fighting Crime by Treating Substance Abuse, located at: <http://issues.org/15-1/belenk/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Patients discharged from medium secure forensic psychiatry services: reconvictions and risk factors, located at: <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/190/3/223.long>.

<sup>iv</sup> Substance Abuse Programs Reduce Recidivism, located at:  
<http://www.corrections.com/news/article/22508-substance-abuse-programs-reduce-recidivism>.

<sup>v</sup> The California Department of Education, located at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/tr/>

<sup>vi</sup> The California Department of Education, located at:  
<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SuspExp/TruancyReport.aspx?cChoice=TruRate&ReportCode=TruRate&cType=All&cName=LOS.ANGELES&cCounty=19&cCds=19000000000000&cYear=2014-15&cLevel=County>.

<sup>vii</sup> The California Department of Education, located at:  
<<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DropoutReporting/DrpGradeEth.aspx?cDistrictName=LOS%20ANGELES&CDSCode=1900000000000000&Level=County&TheReport=GradeEth&ProgramName=All&cYear=2014-15&cAggSum=CTotGrade&cGender=B>>